

Study Guide: Our Light Affliction (Luke 6:22-26)

Summary:

In this teaching we studied the third and fourth categories of Jesus's Beatitudes, focusing on how there is happiness in the hardships and how worldly comfort can be spiritually dangerous. Jesus teaches that opposition and persecution for His sake validate and invigorate discipleship. Trials are not wasted. They mature us spiritually and draw us closer to heaven. Whether suffering comes *from* discipleship or *for* discipleship, we are called to rejoice because their eternal reward far exceeds any earthly loss.

Key Points

Happiness is in the Hardships (Luke 6:22-23)

Jesus blesses those who are hated, excluded, reviled, and cast out for His sake. This opposition validates your discipleship in Christ, and the eternal reward in heaven far outweighs any earthly loss. Believers join the company of prophets and heroes who suffered for righteousness.

Understanding Persecution (Matthew 5:10)

The Greek word "persecuted" (dioko) means "to be hunted" or "chased after." Persecution arises specifically from doing what is right for God's glory, and the source is irrelevant — what matters is that it comes for righteousness's sake.

Trials Produce Spiritual Maturity (James 1:2-4, 12)

Trials and temptations should produce joy and develop steadfastness, endurance, and perseverance. Trials are God's way of maturing believers and exchanging childishness for the maturity in Christ, allowing affliction to invigorate discipleship.

Happiness is NOT in Worldly Happiness (Luke 6:24-26)

The four woes are inversions of the beatitudes, warning against spiritual dangers. Disciples cannot have footing in both God's Kingdom and the world.

Core Truths

Opposition validates your discipleship in Christ and affliction invigorates your discipleship with Christ. Whether suffering comes from or for your discipleship, believers are called to rejoice in their eternal reward. God never wastes a trial.

Key Verses

- **John 15:18-19** — The world hates disciples because they are not of the world
- **1 John 3:13** — Do not marvel if the world hates you
- **James 1:2-4, 12** — Count it all joy when you fall into various trials
- **2 Timothy 3:12** — All who desire to live godly in Christ will suffer persecution

- **2 Corinthians 4:17, Romans 8:18** — Light affliction working for far greater eternal glory
- **Romans 8:18** — Present sufferings not worthy to be compared with future glory
- **Psalms 119:71** — It is good for me that I have been afflicted
- **Philippians 3:7-8** — Counting all things loss for the excellence of knowing Christ
- **Colossians 3:2** — Set your mind on things above, not on things of earth
- **James 4:4** — Friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God
- **1 John 2:15-17** — Do not love the world or things in the world

Points for Further Study

1. **The Nature of Persecution:** Think on how persecution differs across cultures and time periods, and identify modern forms of being "hunted" for righteousness's sake. Distinguish between persecution for Christ and consequences of our own poor choices.
2. **The Perspective Shift:** Study practical ways to train ourselves to see trials through an eternal lens. Study what it means to "set your mind on things above" (Colossians 3:2) and how understanding God's Kingdom reality transforms our response to suffering.
3. **Spiritual Maturity Through Trials:** Consider the specific character traits that God develops through different types of trials and how trials serve as instruments of spiritual formation.
4. **The Danger of Worldly Comfort:** Consider why spiritual complacency is more dangerous than persecution and tribulation. Examine how to recognize when we're becoming too comfortable with the world's values and losing our spiritual hunger.
5. **The Woes as Warnings:** Study how the four woes function as a mirror to the beatitudes and analyze the spiritual condition of someone who is "rich," "full," "laughing," and "spoken well of." Develop strategies for guarding against these spiritual dangers in our own lives.

Discussion Questions

1. **Personal Reflection:** Have you experienced opposition or persecution for doing what is right for God's glory? How did you respond? When have you felt the tension between following Christ and seeking worldly approval?
2. **Understanding Opposition:** Why do you think Jesus specifically chose the word "persecuted" (hunted/chased) rather than other words for suffering? How does knowing that opposition validates your discipleship change the way you view conflict?
3. **The Perspective Shift:** What does it practically look like to "rejoice and leap for joy" when facing persecution? What would change in your life if you truly believed your "reward is great in heaven"?
4. **Trials and Maturity:** How have you seen trials produce steadfastness in your own life or in others? How does James's teaching on trials deepen your understanding of Jesus's beatitudes?
5. **Worldly Comfort:** Why should disciples feel "uncomfortable" with worldly ease and comfort? How do we balance being "in the world but not of the world"?
6. **Application and Challenge:** What is one area where you need to shift your perspective from earthly to eternal? How can you practically "count it all joy" in a current trial you're facing?